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PRESS RELEASE

—For Immediate Release—

On October 27, 2006, Chief Justice Leigh Saufley presented the Judicial Branch Special Service Award to the members of the Kennebec Co-Occurring Disorders Court Team. Team members include Kennebec and Somerset Counties District Attorney Everett Fowl, Attorney John Pelletier, Elizabeth Simoni from Maine Pretrial Services, Case Manager Jim McGurty, Peter Wohl from Crisis and Counseling, Hartwell Dowling from the Administrative Office of the Courts, Intern Hadley Austin, Kennebec Superior Court Associate Clerk Lisa Wait, and Superior Court Justice Nancy Mills.

The Co-Occurring Disorders Court was established to support persons involved in the criminal justice system who have mental health and substance abuse problems and to reduce their incarceration. The primary goals of this court are to give its members the support, understanding, resources, treatment, and medicine they need to succeed; to encourage acceptance of responsibility for criminal conduct and not to minimize the effect of that conduct; to maintain the integrity of the criminal justice system and public safety; and to provide assistance

and information to the public, judges, attorneys, and prosecutors regarding co-occurring disorders and available resources.

During the presentation, Chief Justice Saufley observed that this team has served diligently and tirelessly since the beginning of the CODC in June 2005. Although the team meets formally once a week, membership on the team often requires a seven-day per week commitment. Mental health and substance abuse crises cannot be predicted or scheduled and the work involved to support each individual in the court is substantial.

The Special Service Award is presented by the Maine Judicial Branch on an annual basis to those who make a contribution to improvements in the operation and performance of the Judicial Branch that is deserving of public recognition. In accepting the award, Justice Mills noted that each member of the team brings a special expertise to the table but all share the sincere belief that we can do a better job in Maine for people with co-occurring disorders who face criminal charges. This Team of dedicated and innovative people has made that belief a reality by addressing the needs of these defendants in new ways that are more effective and ultimately less costly than traditional means.